

English B

Overall grade boundaries

Grade:	E	D	C	B	A
Mark range:	0 - 7	8 - 15	16 - 22	23 - 28	29 - 36

The range and suitability of the work submitted

There was a wide range of topics submitted this session with only a slight majority favouring category 3 literature. Within category 2, the vast majority of candidates chose topics in category 2b, essays of a general cultural nature based on specific cultural artifacts. Essays that approach a cultural topic broadly rather than having the concept illustrated by cultural artifacts (icons or symbols) tended to be mediocre at best. There were few essays submitted in category 1 despite the coverage of general language usage and linguistic issues within the IB Language B syllabus.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: research question

Most candidates included a research question appropriately in the introduction or early in the essay. The two most common problems with weak research questions is that they are far too broad in scope, or in the case of category 2b essays, they are not focused on the artifacts that illustrate the cultural issue being highlighted. Candidates should identify which category is being addressed by the research question explicitly either on the cover page or in the introduction.

Criterion B: introduction

Most candidates successfully integrate the research question in the introduction; however fewer candidates successfully make it clear how a non-literary research question is specific or of special interest to English language or culture.

Criterion C: investigation

The best essays regardless of the chosen category had a clear, appropriate and reasonably varied list of sources. Weaker essays tended to have internet-based sources rather than more scholarly, primary sources. Evaluation of sources is an important step in the early stages of the process.

Criterion D: knowledge and understanding of the topic studied

This criteria often reflects the quality of the sources consulted. The best essays not only show knowledge of the subject, but can demonstrate a clear understanding through the various links made between sources and concepts. Superficial and anecdotal knowledge is not sufficient for an academic approach to most topics.

Criterion E: reasoned argument

If the research question as in the best essays is well thought-out, well focused and well phrased, it will likely lend itself to a solid argument. The extended essay is an investigation, but it is also a persuasive piece of writing that interprets the material and presents it in a convincing manner to support the candidate's assertions. The argument can only be convincing if sufficient evidence from credible sources is used. What separates the best essays from the mediocre is the flow of the essay where sections are linked logically leading the reader to the point. Mere description or plot summary will not result in high achievement.

Criterion F: application of analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to the subject

To smoothly integrate the evidence to support assertions made in the essay is a sophisticated but necessary skill for the highest awards in this criteria. A number of candidates still have difficulty distinguishing between analysis and description. In the case of literature, the evidence must come primarily from the text(s) treated. Weak arguments will inevitably lead to lower marks in this criterion.

Criterion G: use of language appropriate to the subject

The general level of language across the subject is appropriate and in some cases quite impressive. Clarity, not the level of vocabulary or the complexity of sentence structure, is the most important factor in gaining the higher marks in this criterion. Candidates would do well to remember that the EE is an academic exercise and that the register must then be appropriate.

Criterion H: conclusion

Conclusions remain a weak spot as in previous sessions. Though a summary of the points made will certainly be consistent with what has been presented, candidates should look for “a new synthesis in light of the discussion” (EE Guide 2009, p 45) to bring closure to the argument.

Criterion I: formal presentation

This is an area that has improved in recent sessions no doubt due to the online resources allowing candidates to produce consistently well formatted works cited or bibliographic pages. Candidates should remember that only works actually cited within the paper should be included on the bibliography page. The best essays also show a consistent application of an academic referencing system.

Criterion J: abstract

The abstract does not form part of the body of the essay and therefore is not in the word count. The abstract should appear directly after the title page, on a single sheet of paper. The three requirements for the abstract are straightforward and clearly explained in the guide; the research question, how the question was narrowed and investigated, and the conclusions reached.

Criterion K: holistic judgement

Many essays received fairly high marks in this criterion especially those where supervisors added relevant comments about candidate enthusiasm, positive engagement in the process and insights from the viva voce. Too many supervisors continue to leave the supervisor's comment section of the coversheet blank or make inappropriate comments of a personal nature. This makes the application of criterion K far more difficult for examiners and often leaves a poor impression. Supervisors should refrain from evaluating the essay itself, as this is an externally assessed piece of work. Supervisors should be reminded that the comments written here assist the examiner in arriving at a mark for this criterion.

Recommendations for the supervision of future candidates

Both candidates and supervisors are strongly advised to read the appropriate sections of the Extended Essay Guide (new for the 2013 session) early in the process and consult the guide regularly throughout the process for guidance both before and during the writing stages.

It is important for candidates and supervisors to evaluate the variety as well as the quality of possible sources for the research question whether from the web or in hard copy form. When insufficient resources are available, the candidate will need to alter the research question.

It is strongly recommended that sufficient time early on in the process be given to the formulation of the research question.

The viva voce is a good opportunity to assess what the student has learned about the investigative process. This reflection on the process and the candidate's engagement is what drives the comments on the EE coversheet. Personal circumstances or lack of anecdotes are rarely pertinent to the assessment.